

Integrating Alternative Educational Pathways: Challenges and Issues

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ABSTRACT

The paper examines the issue of educational pathways, including a brief overview of the higher education regulatory framework and market forces in Australia, particularly as recent policy reforms and political aspirations affect them. It highlights the key challenges and outlines a potential model for integrating vocational and higher educational pathways. Negotiating with internal and external stakeholders, position power, market and financial analysis may be the most successful levers in this change process. Three market research studies targeting prospective students, parents of prospective students, and the general resident population in Sydney provide evidence of prospective consumers' intention, motivation, and reaction to the proposed model.

INTRODUCTION

There is a renewed interest in Australia in educational transitions to address educational, career, and work needs of young adults eligible for post-secondary education. In 2007, the Group of Eight¹ universities issued a policy paper that argued that for Australia to remain competitive internationally a higher level of educational attainment for its population was essential. Later that year the newly-elected federal Labor government promoted the concept of an educational revolution and wider social inclusion. Early in 2008, the New South Wales state government consulted widely with key stakeholders about its policy on school retention strategies, with a view

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to raising the school age so that by remaining at school longer, students would be encouraged to further and higher education rather than entering the workforce directly.

The educational revolution proposed by the federal government embraces a lifelong learning strategy from secondary school to post-school education and a more incorporated approach between schools, vocational education and training, and higher education; and a merit-based entry to a university education with minimal financial burden for students. However, what is unfolding at this stage is more of the same, although there appears to be an effort to enhance co-operation between the Council of Australian Governments (MCEETYA) and the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education as well as enhanced provision of preschool education onwards, better quality teaching and training. No new models for easing the transition from school to further or higher education have been pronounced.

Most policy analysts, educators, and politicians would agree that something needs to be done to integrate educational pathways more effectively, something widely recommended in research on access and equity in Australia over the last decade (e.g., CSHE, 2008). Some would argue that Australia is moving closer toward this position through the introduction of the dual-sector technology universities (one in most state capital cities), private higher education providers (HEPs), and technical and further education (TAFE), most of whom offer a variety of qualifications as well as some alignment between these. However, while these institutions have managed to align or group various educational pathways within their institutions, there is little convergence.

More importantly, the fact that an increasing number of institutions offer various pathways does not in itself lead to an inclusive learning environment. The outcome of these initiatives over the last decade or so is that pathway students, historically under-served by higher education, are relegated to the technology universities (what were at one time institutes of technology / colleges of advanced education) or TAFE. Both types of institutions have traditionally catered to students in the lower socio-economic (SES) groups and the issue is the extent to which it has affected the social mobility of these students and moreover, the equity and diversity of privileged universities, where access is somewhat limited. Access to a degree opportunity is socially inherent within specific learning contexts and institutions, so the universities requiring high entry scores tend to recruit from advantaged schools both public and private.

In research-ranked universities, with the exception of a sprinkling of university-access programs that mostly target mature-aged adults (over 20 years), there has been little evidence of alternative or second-chance educational pathways for students who do not gain university access. More importantly, the brand (not necessarily the reputation of learning and teaching delivery) of these institutions, reflected in domestic and global rankings, is diminished not only by adding vocational education, which focuses on applied learning and teaching, but also by recruiting students who have not achieved direct entry access.

Further, where educational pathways are provided, they are often characterized by traditional pedagogy and support services. Creating an effective and inclusive learning context for all students through an integrated educational pathway approach on a diverse campus in an inclusive learning context remains a significant challenge.

OVERVIEW: RECENT REFORMS IN HIGHER AND FURTHER EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

The 1990s saw higher education in Australia go from a three- to a two-tier system, as colleges of advanced education (roughly equivalent to four-year colleges in the US) were abolished. The early 2000s (JCHE, 2000) witnessed more change and growth in the Australian higher education sector when the federal government became responsible for the funding of higher education under the Higher Education Support Act (HESA) of 2003, which subjected all HEPs to quality and accountability requirements. Flanking these reforms, the federal government (Commonwealth of Australia, 1990) identified six equity groups to target for improved access and equity:

- people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds;
- rural and isolated;
- from a non-English speaking background;
- women in nontraditional areas of study and higher degrees;
- with a disability; and
- Indigenous people.

The government also established equity performance indicators (EPIs) (access; participation; retention; success; and completions) for some groups and specified outcomes for the remainder. The equity groups and indicators differed across the sectors (e.g., unemployed persons are an identified group in the vocational sector). Despite the expansion of higher education

places in Australia, there has been little improvement in either the EPIs (and in some cases a decline) for the targeted groups. In the case of low socio-economic status, the level of participation in higher education remains persistently low.

The aim of the higher education reforms at the end of 2003 altered the higher education market due to the growth of HEPs from 31 in 2003 to over 150 in 2008 as well as student places and demand. The rise in student demand was stimulated by the previous Australian government's policy of user-choice, allowing domestic students to gain financial support from government (fee-help) in both private and public institutions, together with Commonwealth-supported places in areas of national priority (e.g., nursing and education). As a result of these measures, student enrollments have grown considerably over the last decade, and so has the competition for students and student places. Both domestic and international students are being recruited globally, with every institution seeking a greater market share. For example, domestic students aged 17-22 years increased from 3.9 million in 1996 to 4.3 million in 2006. Over 10 years to 2016, the population is forecast to increase by 390,500 to 4.7 million. In 2006, there were 383,800 international students in Australia enrolled across all sectors. This number has increased by 40 percent (109,000 students) since 2002. Paralleling this trend, the rights of students as consumers have grown and with it issues of access and equity, giving rise to a greater need for policy implementation to support this.

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) register requires all HEPs to be accredited for operation. There are 44 self-accrediting providers in Australia (most of which are universities) and over 150 non-self accrediting providers (mostly private). The objectives of AQF are to:

- “provide nationally consistent recognition of outcomes achieved in post-compulsory education;
- help with developing flexible pathways which assist people to move more easily between education and training sectors and between those sectors and the labor market by providing the basis for recognition of prior learning, including credit transfer and work and life experience;
- integrate and streamline the requirements of participating providers, employers and employees, individuals and interested organizations;

- offer flexibility to suit the diversity of purposes of education and training;
- encourage individuals to progress through the levels of education and training by improving access to qualifications, clearly defining avenues for achievement, and generally contributing to lifelong learning;
- encourage the provision of more and higher quality vocational education and training through qualifications that normally meet workplace requirements and vocational needs, thus contributing to national economic performance; and
- promote national and international recognition of qualifications offered in Australia.”

The delivery and organization of education among HEPs has paralleled this complexity. Until the mid-2000s, the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector was differentiated from higher education by type of education and qualifications. Adding to the complexity is the fact that VET has to be delivered by registered training organizations, which means any institution offering vocational programs has to register and become accredited by the state in which the program is delivered. However, with new funding regulations, private HEPs, many of whom grew out of the VET sector, are now able to offer both VET and higher education pathways for their students. The introduction of associate degrees as a higher education award on the AQF meant that TAFE could also offer these qualifications, especially those consistent with emerging industries. The wider delivery of higher education qualifications has caused concern about quality standards and efficiency, given the perceived duplication.

While these changes have contributed to greater choice and perhaps improved access to qualifications for students, the reality is that they have facilitated educational transitions, with entry and exit barriers being imposed, leading to blockages or detours (e.g., lack of recognition by universities for prior learning, poor articulation routes or agreements, deficient credit transfer). The upshot is that if students seek to upgrade their qualification, there is often a need for replication of learning at the next level or little recognition for knowledge gained at the previous, which is wasteful for the individual, the employer, and the quality of the labor market. These detours may mean that an increasing number of young adults, in particular, abstain from moving from the employment track to an educational pathway or upgrading their qualifications to the next level (e.g., vocational pathway

to higher education). Perhaps as evidence of this, in April 2008 much less than 50 percent of 20 to 24 year olds were engaged in full-time education in Australia (ABS 2008).

It might be useful at this point to view the incidence of training choices open to employers. Table 1 outlines Training choices for 2005 and 2007 and shows that, although employing apprentices and trainees increased slightly, vocational and education and training declined overall in the two year period to 2007. Employers providing no training at all increased during this period.

Table 1: Training choices for 2005 and 2007^a

	2005	2007
<i>Percentage of all employers:</i>		
<i>Employers using the VET system</i>	57.1	54.0
<i>Employers having jobs that require vocational qualifications</i>	35.0	33.3
<i>Employers employing apprentices and trainees</i>	28.2	29.1
<i>Employers using nationally recognized training^b</i>	24.1	22.1
<i>Employers using unaccredited training</i>	53.0	49.0
<i>Employers using informal training</i>	72.1	71.0
<i>Employers providing no training</i>	12.6	13.9

Source: 2007 Survey of Employer Use and Views of the VET System

a Employers were asked about their use of VET and other forms of training in the 12 months preceding their interview.

b Nationally recognized training is defined as nationally recognized training other than as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship. For the purposes of this survey, apprenticeships and traineeships are reported separately.

An Adult Community Education framework was set up by MCEETYA (1997) to direct and support adult non-award education funded largely by state government through TAFE, local government, or continuing education departments of universities. Community education is the most siloed of all the educational sectors with little articulation to VET or higher education, and much of it is provided through a user-pays system.

Given the reforms over the last decade, the complexity of the educational system and the decline in employer-based training have made it clear that Australia needs to ensure that its workforce is competitive through a higher quality provision of accredited education, development, and training. To achieve this, it may be time to better integrate educational pathways

through a softening of barriers between them by acknowledging prior learning and credit transfer for completed qualifications. Another factor driving Australia in this direction is the fact that over 40 percent of its research and development labor force are VET qualified (ABS 2007).

In 2008, the Australian Government announced a major review of its higher education system that will examine and report on the future direction of the sector, its fitness for purpose in meeting the needs of the Australian community/economy, and the options for ongoing reform.

PLUS ÇA CHANGE, PLUS C'EST LA MÊME CHOSE

Despite the reforms of the previous two decades and the introduction of the AQF, the big picture in Australia remains one of segregated learning sub-sectors, that is higher education, vocational, community, and secondary. These sectors are characterized by limited acceleration options from one to another, restrictive quotas largely due to declining educational infrastructure and funding, lack of second-chance choices, inadequate credit transfer, and recognition for prior learning.

In reality, discipline-based knowledge and learning delivered mainly by universities is separate from vocational learning delivered by institutions of TAFE, covering fields such as hospitality, tourism, construction, engineering, secretarial skills, visual arts, computer programming, and community work; employer based (private and public); and community colleges, which offer a wide range of short, non-award courses to their local community, often targeting newly-arrived Australian residents.

The differences between these various learning domains (e.g., vocational and higher education) remain even where they co-exist within the one institution (e.g., TAFE or a technology university), stemming from entrenched educational perspectives. While undoubtedly university educators now recognize the importance of career preparation and work readiness, they still emphasize theoretical knowledge as their *raison d'être*. This perspective assumes that a university education enables students to adjust continuously throughout their life by upgrading their knowledge and skills, and developing openness, flexibility, and their capacity to understand their world. On the other hand, TAFE, vocational educators and workplace-learning practitioners emphasize the relevance of learning through enactment and forming a skill base that can be applied to real-world contexts.

Both these learning domains contribute to various approaches in continuing education as well as continuing professional education (CPD),

which often sits at the periphery of universities, colleges and the professions. Most faculties within universities and many other higher education providers offer CPD and most also offer some form of community education (non-award short courses) through an ancillary arm.

Anecdotal evidence based on recent personal visits to selected US, UK, Hong Kong, and selected Australian institutions suggest that many extension divisions are contributing financially to their associated university in a fairly significant way. This situation appears to be in sharp contrast to the greater Australian context, where many universities support ancillaries largely for their social value and some positive but indirect financial effects.

However, as Australian universities experience increased financial pressures, (exacerbated by the newly elected Australian government's decision to withdraw full-fee paying university places for local students from 2009), efforts to optimize revenue are focused on international students and programs and services such as continuing education both for personal and professional development. Continuing education may be rehabilitated as institutions understand its crucial role in promoting both financial sustainability as well as educational access for students. This is highly relevant now in Australia, which faces an ageing workforce and a young workforce needing to gain and upgrade their skills and qualifications.

Furthermore, despite the changes towards a greater grouping of pathways within institutions, there has been little transformation of learning and teaching. Each sector is characterized by traditional pedagogy and work practices largely left in the hands of teachers and not driven at the institutional level, despite efforts to do so strategically. Other than individual innovation in learning and teaching, rewarded at institutional and government levels², little has changed across the sector.

CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES

The twenty-first century economy is one of globalization and integration, presenting many challenges and potential strategies for education. In the context of this paper, the following are addressed:

How to achieve greater integration?

As we have witnessed in Australia, the processes likely to lead to effective integration remain the responsibility of institutions and individuals within them rather than politicians and policy makers. There are pockets of integration and innovation but as Field (2000, p. 90) points out: "... the demand for flexible and more mobile labor has not risen as a result of policies designed to reduce barriers to movement."

How do we provide qualified and work-ready students?

Career routes in this century are part of a global employment market and less clear-cut than in the past. Long lead times for career development in the past have been compressed due to technological, market, and regulatory change, making work more complex and intensifying the pressure for qualifications and work readiness. Careers represent for most people a series of planned and unplanned choices and decisions. A career path is understood usually in hindsight. However, in order to prepare for career choices, students are demanding greater opportunities for career mobility as well as the formation of transferable skills and knowledge as well as qualifications.

How do we remove the impediments for individual choice about education?

Systems of formal education are quite self-contained. After leaving school most individuals have two educational alternatives, either enrolling in a university (or higher education provider usually private) or in an institution of further vocational education. A third option is entering the labor market. Income, qualifications, and learning opportunities will vary according to the chosen pathway, both in the short and long term. With the exception of the university pathway, opportunities for educational attainment are generally limited.

Employers want more opportunities to contribute and influence the system of formal education.

Employer-sponsored forms of training and development have been cultivated for many decades in a system of government support via industry grants and schemes. Many employers still look for incentives to educate their workforce and do little if they cannot source these. Although attitudes are beginning to change, an extra hurdle to negotiate with employers is that when they fund education and training directly, they expect to

prescribe the requirements that may conflict with those of the educational provider. Employer requirements may be leading to an overall softening of demand for university education in the domestic student market, where young adults may opt to enter the labor market rather than delay this for educational reasons.

Vocationally oriented programs are applied and do not require the same form of thinking as higher educational programs.

The future of work readiness in the new economy is in its emphasis on critical skills (understanding, problem solving, communication, leadership). Moreover, new industries of the twenty-first century will require a similar level of scholarship and research. Instead of being peripheral to the university, it should be seen as an incubator of new ways of thinking and doing in new fields of knowledge. The two learning domains (vocational and higher education) are part of a lifelong learning continuum and ways of integrating rather than aligning them need to be considered.

Why has achieving equity through remedial education been slow and ineffective? Research elsewhere suggests some issues for consideration. For example, Attewell et al. (2006) found that only one in four US students who take remedial courses at community colleges ultimately graduate. The magnitude of the remedial education challenge in the US is much greater than this, with estimates of around 60 percent of students entering community colleges and the like requiring some form of special support (Kirst 2007). The inequity might exist in how remedial education is structured and delivered in different contexts (public and independent schools) to different socio-economic groups.

Diversity is often perceived to impede other goals of higher education policy such as quality and sustainability, or a perceived diminution of these which will ultimately impact reputation and brand of institutions in which they reside.

These perceptions lead to choices about types of programs, students and entry requirements with marginal gains.

WHAT IS NEEDED?

A national capability development strategy requiring, at the very least, the formation of knowledge and skills and transfer of advanced work-related skills that is best executed within a more integrated approach, whereby

senior secondary, vocational, and higher education are less isolated from each other. How might such a strategy materialize?

A COLLEGE CONCEPT WITHIN A RESEARCH INTENSIVE UNIVERSITY

To alter the educational landscape of the future, The College concept is proposed. It would offer a range of senior secondary, vocational, tertiary, and continuing professional pathway programs, including noncredit short courses for business training, self-improvement, or leisure enrichment. The pathways would provide opportunities for people of all ages needing second-chance educational and employment opportunities. It is important to go beyond access only and consider the full advantage of a diversity and equity agenda that includes raising awareness, expectations, and programs that prepare students for further and higher education.

In order to establish pathways and a tripartite credit system among schools, TAFE, and universities (in addition to their own credit systems plus the one that schools have with TAFE) as well as to increase levels of aspiration and confidence through developmental education courses for students, school partnerships are essential. Prospective senior high students would be offered an opportunity within the College to focus on key disciplinary areas such as mathematics, science, and the humanities, and talented students could take an accelerated pathway to better prepare them for managing their tertiary studies and beyond.

A College would act as both a gateway (access and diversity) and a gatekeeper (quality assurance). A new-approach curriculum would be established as well as qualifications, focused on the demands of learners (young people; employees; employers sponsoring staff to upgrade; older adults needing to retrain or re-enter the workforce; professionals; active retirees). The College would link individual needs and identify potential pathways (pre-tertiary, tertiary, university) to ensure access through articulation and provide students with the education and development to extend them as necessary by:

- guaranteeing every College student would master functional academic English, attain adequate quantitative skills, and critical skill capability (e.g. communication, problem-solving) in Year 1 of their program in preparation for their next step;

- improving tertiary and vocational access through credits based on the completion of previous qualifications as well as clearly defined articulation routes and agreements;
- assisting universities to select high potential candidates for higher education through agreed standards overseen by their academic boards;
- assuring a diversity pedagogy is used within a framework of high quality educational delivery and outcomes to students;
- promoting the study of another language and culture;
- providing internships and work placements;
- inviting relevant students representatives to participate in designing educational curriculum;
- including relevant industry and business representatives in the design, delivery, and evaluation of curriculum and outcomes.

Alongside this there must be systems of validation and recognition of prior learning and completed qualifications to fulfill the need for accessibility, flexibility, and transparency. Systems to validate and recognize nonformal and informal learning are of utmost importance for groups of people who have been unable to access higher education due to financial constraints, pressure in the labor market, difficulties in balancing their studies and careers, or for any other reason. Further, this approach addresses the necessity of transferring skills from the labor market into the educational system.

WHAT IS DIFFERENT ABOUT THE COLLEGE CONCEPT?

The College concept would be a purposely planned diverse learning campus, where diversity would be conceived of as a process toward better learning and not merely addressing EPIs, as important as these are. Meeting EPIs does not lead to educational integration, inclusion, or diversity. A diverse learning campus means that the very essence of the institution is distinctive in the way it structures the learning context to include individual differences (e.g., both students and faculty, learning styles, and life experiences) as well as group / social differences (e.g., race / ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations) and engages its students in the process of learning and teaching. It is important to minimize intergroup disparities in enrollment, articulation, retention, graduation.

In the College model, the learning and teaching strategy would be based on how to engage diversity in the delivery of learning and teaching, ranging from recruiting a diverse student body, faculty, and staff to transforming curriculum with co-curriculum and pedagogy to reflect and support this. A diverse learning environment needs to have interconnected pathways, student progression tracks within and between them, nested qualifications, recognition of final award, as well as industry and professional destination options (not based on a single occupation). A high level of social acceptance of pathway students as equal members of the learning community would be a prime condition.

Diversity would be used for both student learning purposes and outcomes (e.g. critical skills of problem-solving, communication and leadership). The College would focus on both specific and broad outcomes, the latter going to the heart of diversity so that it would include social capability (e.g., working in teams, developing flexibility to function within and between diverse cultures, academic English, and a second language), autonomy (e.g., work placements and internships), and developing learning goals, educational aspirations to propel lifelong learning and achievement motivation (e.g., intensive learning support and mentoring). Diversity on campus is good not only for students that it brings in and for their futures but also for the wider student community.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE?

Gaining greater acceptance of the College concept has been the challenge so far. A key impediment to realizing the College concept is a degree of trepidation and skepticism by largely academic communities here and elsewhere about enhancing diversity beyond meeting EPIs. An integrated educational model represents for some a perceived diminution of excellence, which will ultimately affect reputation and brand.

To explore the feasibility and to better understand the intention, motivation, and reaction of potential consumers towards a diverse college concept, three empirical studies were conducted in Sydney in 2007-2008. The studies, using similar survey dimensions, targeted prospective students at different stages of their learning life cycle, parents of prospective students, and a sample of the general resident population in Sydney.

Study one: A sample of the general population of Sydney

The first study of 501 residents of the wider Sydney community was designed to investigate the impact of the College concept on the reputation and brand of the University of Sydney. Nearly seventy percent (67.9 percent) of all respondents would choose to study at a college attached to a university with a high reputation if they did not achieve the direct entry score. Furthermore, the findings remove some concerns regarding the integrated initiative. Almost half of the community (49.7 percent) indicated such an initiative would enhance their opinion of the university and 41.9 percent indicated that the college would not change their current opinion of the university. The main reason for opinion enhancement was that the college provided an opportunity for potential students (57.8 percent). The second reason was it provided educational diversity (21.7 percent), followed by trust in the university brand (6.4 percent). Among the 8.4 percent who felt that such a college would diminish their opinion of the university, the main reason was due to their opposition to a profit-driven motive by a university (66.7 percent), followed by potential lowering of standards (31.0 percent) by having students in the college who had not achieved direct entry.

The study found such an initiative would do little to undermine the reputation and brand of the university. The reputation and brand of a university have impact on the community's preference for such an initiative. The higher the perceived reputation and brand awareness of the university, the more likely the positive opinion of the initiative. The finding indicates an expectation of the community for a prestigious university to be involved in the provision of inclusive education. Notwithstanding the persistent impact of reputation and brand of the university, the study also provides evidence that teaching quality and student support are critical for such an initiative. The study also shed a light on a potential market for professional development education: 65.6 percent of the community indicated that they would like to choose continuing professional development with the university, compared to 7.7 percent unlikely.

Study two: Senior secondary school students and parents

The second study of 800 high school students and parents was designed to understand what they, as more immediate consumers, might think about the College concept. The findings revealed a similar picture as in the community, namely the significant role that the reputation and brand of a prestigious university played in consumer decision making. Over 70

percent of Year 9/10/12 students and parents of same, reacted positively to such an initiative, compared to the 6.8 percent who reacted negatively. Overall, both parents and students welcomed an initiative that provided a second chance to enter into a highly desired, prestigious university. A positive relationship between perceived reputation and brand awareness of the university led to an expectation that the university should “move with the times” and alter its offering to meet wider demands and expectations of the community for inclusive education.

Study three: Community education participants

The third study of 575 adults who had experienced a short community-education style course at the university found overwhelming satisfaction in all aspects of their educational experience. The respondents, regardless of age and study area, indicated that the university’s CE program provided professional, qualified, and a variety of courses. The participants believed that teaching quality (73 percent) was particularly important for adult education. Convenience of schedule (54 percent and 42 percent) was the most important factor followed by quality of teaching (53 percent). Increasing one’s knowledge (48 percent) and courses meeting personal interests (41 percent) were also key in choice making.

It would seem that in the minds of prospective consumers that a quality reputation is broadly defined without overtones of privilege and exclusion.

DISCUSSION


Despite the attention that the topic of diversity and inclusive learning has received for decades now, there has been little improvement in either equity performance indicators (and in some cases a decline) for the identified equity groups in Australia and a lack of pathway integration as well as little evidence of an inclusive learning context.

Diversifying faculty is increasingly evident in Australian educational institutions, although this is largely not yet reflected in their ranks of senior management. Both are essential for contributing to an inclusive learning environment. Its success depends on being able to tap into the collective knowledge of diverse faculty and management providing constructive input.

Overcoming resistance to long-established mindsets and individualistic modes of operation between educational sub-sectors is the main challenge facing governments and educational leaders alike. Further, the disparity between graduate attributes and work readiness required by enterprises is not simply a supply issue but an integral higher education management issue that goes to the structure of the labor market, the relatively underdeveloped and immature nature of learning domains as they relate to work (except in the professional areas of medicine, dentistry, and the like), the lack of established clusters amongst the learning sub-sectors, and backlog of poor educational infrastructure. This situation is not going to be solved simply by developing diverse learning environments.

Currently there are no incentives for universities to be proactive in areas of diversity beyond meeting EPIs. Any significant innovation in this area is only likely to be successful, if it is well planned, executed and receives high level, sustained support from senior management and deans of faculties. Further, the program needs to demonstrate that it can stimulate substantial resources and secure revenue or funding for the main university.

One approach might be to get past the traditional transactional approach to educational delivery and move toward becoming more skilled in developing and managing cooperative relationships across the sectors. In the competitive world of higher education, this means looking beyond the traditional boundaries and seeking partners with complementary skills and knowledge so as to offer a total solution to students, employers, and industry. All educational institutions, especially universities, need to understand the benefits of collaborative advantage and developing relationship-specific capabilities that are far superior to what each may possess on its own.

Achieving educational integration and social inclusion requires that educational leaders and politicians be willing to challenge longstanding policies as well as entrenched beliefs and structures which have long impeded improvement in educational pathways. The College concept is an example of one such framework. 

ENDNOTES

1. A group formed about 10 years ago in Australia's, equivalent to the US Ivy League universities in terms of reputation and brand, which acts as a lobby group for its members.
2. The Australian Awards for University Teaching were established in 1997 by the Commonwealth Government to celebrate and reward excellence in university teaching.

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